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SOUTH KOREA PRODUCING CARS

ANNCR:

FOR CENTURIES A TOUGH AND RELIABLE LITTLE PONY COULD BE FOUND THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA. BUT THAT SMALL HORSE HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED AND A NEW KIND OF PONY IS ABOUT TO BE SEEN IN ITS PLACE IN SOUTH KOREA, AS WE HEAR IN THIS REPORT FROM VOA'S JOHN SCHULZ IN SEOUL.

VOICE:

TO THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY IT'S CALLED THE NEW ATTACK FROM THE EAST. TO EXPERTS AT THE AUTO SHOW IN TURAN, IT WAS THE FOCUS OF MAJOR ATTENTION. AND TO ITS BUILDERS, ITS TOUGHNESS AND RELIABILITY ARE ALL THAT MATTER NOW. IT'S THE PONY... THE NEWEST THING IN SOUTH KOREA... THE NAME FOR THE AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURED IN SOUTH KOREAN HISTORY.

LAST MONTH, TWENTY PONY PROTOTYPES ROLLED OFF THE NEW ASSEMBLY LINE AT THE HYUNDAI MOTOR COMPANY'S PLANT IN ULSAN AND BY THE END OF JANUARY THREE HUNDRED MORE WILL BE COMPLETED AND READY FOR SALE. BY FEBRUARY, HYUNDAI PLANS TO BE AT FULL PRODUCTION, TURNING OUT TWELVE HUNDRED CARS PER MONTH. AT FULL CAPACITY, THE PLANT CAN TURN OUT SEVENTY THOUSAND GASOLINE POWERED AUTOS PER YEAR AND WILL BEGIN PRODUCING TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND ADDITIONAL DIESEL POWERED UNITS IN OCTOBER.

AS FOR ENTERING THE PONY IN THE TOUGH INTERNATIONAL SALES COMPETITION, NEGOTIATIONS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY IN SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG, IN THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES OF ECUADOR AND BOLIVIA, AND MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES LIKE

GREECE AND KUWAIT WHICH HAVE NO DOMESTIC MANUFACTURERS.

THE ENGINE GETS OVER FIFTY MILES TO THE GALLON AND ACTUAL DRIVING CONDITIONS SHOW FOURTEEN KILOMETERS PER LITER DRIVING ON HIGHWAYS AT EIGHTY KILOMETERS PER HOUR. THE CAR ALREADY CAN PASS THE TOUGH ANTI-SMOG EMISSION STANDARDS IN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES. IN ADDITION, SOUTH KOREA'S LOW LABOR COSTS MAKE THE UNIT COST PER AUTOMOBILE ONE OF THE LOWEST IF NOT THE LOWEST FOR ANY AUTO IN ITS CLASS.

HYUNDAI IS ALREADY PLANNING FOR ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND CARS PER YEAR PLUS TRUCKS AND BUSES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THAT MAY SEEM OVER OPTIMISTIC, BUT INTERNATIONAL AUTO EXPERTS HAVE WATCHED THE SOUTH KOREAN PONY AT CLOSE RANGE AND THEIR VERDICT IS THAT THE NEW BABY OF KYUNDAI IS A REAL THOROUGHbred.

JS/CAK